# **EXHIBIT 9**



















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The Opinion Pages | OP-ED COLUMNIST

# The Tucson Witch Hunt



Tragedy in Tucson. Six Dead. Democratic congresswoman shot in the head at rally.

Immediately after the news broke, the air became thick with conjecture, speculation and innuendo. There was a giddy, almost punch-drunk excitement on the left. The prophecy had been fulfilled: "words have consequences." And now, the right's rhetorical chickens had finally come home to roost.

The dots were too close and the temptation to connect them too strong. The target was a Democratic congresswoman. There was the map of her district in the cross hairs. There were her own prescient worries about overheated rhetoric.

Within hours of the shooting, there was a full-fledged witch hunt to link the shooter to the right.

"I saw Goody Proctor with the devil! Oh, I mean Jared Lee Loughner! Yes him. With the devil!"

The only problem is that there was no evidence then, and even now, that overheated rhetoric from the right had anything to do with the shooting. (In fact, a couple of people who said they knew him have described him as either apolitical or "quite liberal.") The picture emerging is of a sad and lonely soul slowly, and publicly, slipping into insanity.



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This was a brave column. Let's hope that the columnist's employer and fellow columnists don't take offense. Readers who

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Charles M. Blow Damon Winter/The New York Times SEE ALL COMMENTS

I have written about violent rhetoric before, and I'm convinced that it's poisonous to our politics, that the preponderance of it comes from the right, and that it has the potential to manifest in massacres like the one in Tucson.

But I also know that potential, possibility and even plausibility are not proof.

The American people know it, too. According to a USA Today/Gallup poll released Wednesday, 42 percent of those asked said that political rhetoric was not a factor at all in the shooting, 22 percent said that it was a minor factor and 20 percent said that it was a major factor. Furthermore, most agreed that focusing on conservative rhetoric as a link in the shooting was "not a legitimate point but mostly an attempt to use the tragedy to make conservatives look bad." And nearly an equal number of people said that Republicans, the Tea Party and Democrats had all "gone too far in using inflammatory language" to criticize their opponents.



Great. So the left overreacts and overreaches and it only accomplishes two things: fostering sympathy for its opponents and nurturing a false equivalence within the body politic. Well done, Democrats.

Now we've settled into the byany-means-necessary argument: anything that gets us to focus on the rhetoric and tamp it down is a good thing. But a wrong in the service of righteousness is no less wrong, no less corrosive, no less a

menace to the very righteousness it's meant to support.

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You can't claim the higher ground in a pit of quicksand.

Concocting connections to advance an argument actually weakens it. The argument for tonal moderation has been done a tremendous disservice by those who sought to score political points in the absence of proof.

I invite you to join me on  $\underline{\text{Facebook}}$  and follow me on  $\underline{\text{Twitter}},$  or e-mail me at chblow@nytimes.com.

A version of this op-ed appears in print on January 15, 2011, on Page A23 of the New York edition with the headline: The Tucson Witch Hunt. Today's Paper | Subscribe

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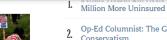
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